

RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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## BOWERY BILLY AT CONEY ISLAND

THE BUNCO KING



"Green banners, Marston, but dat's a trick!" cried Bowery Billy. The banner



## BOY DETECTIVES

by J. Edw. Leithead

## PART II

Leaving the black-and-white publications, we now turn to one of the few boy detectives in colored cover weeklies. There were young detective assistants in the Nick Carter tales—Patsy Murphy, Patsy Garvan, Bob Ferret, Jack Burton, Roxy, the girl detective—but I have referred to them in other articles in DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP. Young Broadbrim began his brief career in #52 of the Street & Smith publication that, up until then, had been entitled Old Broadbrim Weekly. With the appearance of Harry Wilson, or Young Broadbrim, in Young Broadbrim, the Boy Detective, or, The Old Quaker's Youthful Ally, title of the weekly was changed to fit the younger man.

Old Broadbrim, who had been the chief character for 51 previous issues, was kept active in the new series but given less prominence. The old detective, so far as I know, first came to life in Old Cap Collier Library—#92, Old Broadbrim, Quaker Detective, #162, Old Broadbrim's Latest Trail, #186, Old Broadbrim's Double Game, #253, Old Broadbrim's Tangled Case, etc.—and possibly all of these were reprinted in the Street & Smith weekly, for #1 was Old Broadbrim, the Quaker Detective.

But a lot of new stories must have been written, particularly those featuring Young Broadbrim, and Nick

Carter appeared in three issues of Old Broadbrim, Nos. 46, 47, 48 (we can be sure Nick didn't handle cases with the old Quaker in Old Cap Collier Library). I believe that St. George Rathborne authored the Broadbrim tales for Street & Smith, and he may even have penned those published by Munro. At any rate, Young Broadbrim lasted only 29 issues, and this is cause for wonderment, as they seem to have been good detective tales. Besides Harry Wilson, when the new series began, there was introduced still another youthful assistant to the old Quaker detective, Dandy Dick Burton. It reminds one somewhat of Old King Brady and Harry Brady talking to read these opening paragraphs from Young Broadbrim Weekly #76, Young Broadbrim's Strange Find, or, The Mansion of Mysteries:

" 'I tell thee it is an odd case,' remarked Old Broadbrim, as he laid down the paper and addressed the two junior members of the firm.

" 'And you think it was a suicide beyond a doubt?' asked Harry.

" 'Thee has heard me say so.'

" 'And the governor is usually right,' came from Dandy Dick, who was looking out of the window.

" 'But the method was so peculiar,' Harry went on. 'It isn't often that a person goes to such a length to prepare for death. This rich widow was certainly a cool one. Her companion testifies that she even ordered an expensive supper before retiring to her

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bedroom.'

"So it has been proven,' Old Broadbrim assured him.

"She had an awful lot of nerve,' said Dick. 'If I ever want to shuffle off, you can bet your boots I'll take some quicker means than she took.'

"It was deliberate. To sit before a mirror, drink a glass of poison and write down the effects until too weak to write, is certainly a novel scheme. The woman must have been very desperate. What was the cause?' asked Harry.

"Thee has heard that the woman had been crossed in love and that she was a novelist. Even when life had become unbearable to her, she did not forget her art. She has left a record behind her of great value to medicine as well as to authors. The world now knows, from her account, the exact sensations of a person dying from the effects of prussic acid.'"

The Shield Weekly (Street & Smith) for sixteen issues recounted the adventures of Sheridan Keene, Boston sleuth, then, with #17 switched to a boy detective, Steve Manley, who operated around Pittsburgh for five issues, winding up with a tale of another boy ferret, Kit Keen, in Chicago.

Besides stories of Gordon Keith (Sexton Blake) and other adult detectives, Brave and Bold (Street & Smith) contained numerous stories of boy sleuths, reprinted from other sources. There's one about a Kit Keene (with an "e"), by T. C. Harbaugh, which may or may not be a clue to the authorship of some Shield Weekly tales. This Kit seems to have been considerably off the Chicago beat, although that proves nothing—it's Brave and Bold #147, At Trigger Bar, or, Kit Keene, the Young Mountain Detective.

Then there's #158, Bantam Bob, or, The Young Police Spy, by J. C. Cowdrick, of Broadway Billy series fame. And Cowdrick has another, #162, Battery Bob, or, The Young Dock Sleuth of Gotham, both of which may be reprints from Beadle's Half-Dime Library with some alteration in ti-



tles. A third Cowdrick item sounds like an older sleuth—#144, Air-line Luke, or, The Engineer Detective.

Two by Herbert Bellwood are #160 Bound Boy Frank, or The Young Amateur Detective and #163, Business Bob, or, The Boy Spotter of the Slums. Bellwood wrote others about adult detectives, and so did John H. Whitson under the pseudonyms "Lieutenant A. K. Sims" and "Robert Reid."

Others in Brave and Bold were #197, Ranch Bob, or, The Boy Sleuth of Kansas, by Richard Traill, and three by Richard Hackstaff, #199, Bob, the Shadow, or, Solving a Double Mystery, #202, Pete, the Breaker Boy, or, The Young Coal Mine Ferret and #213, Bags, the Boy Detective, or, Following a Warm Trail.

Bowery Billy showed up in ten reprints from the library bearing his name, all with the titles changed:

Brave and Bold #394, Turning a Double Trick, or, The Courage of a Bowery Boy. Although the author is given as "Malcolm Fawcett" and the others that follow are "By John R. Conway," as in Bowery Boy Library, I believe this to be a reprint of Bowery Boy #64.

Brave and Bold #405, Chasing the



Sound Pirate, or, Bowery Billy and the Jolly Comrade. By John R. Conway. Reprint of Bowery Boy Library #72—the title, in fact, is simply reversed, with sub-title first.

Brave and Bold #407, A Fine Spun Thread, or, Bowery Billy and the Alibi. By John R. Conway. Reprint of Bowery Boy #81.

Brave and Bold #411, The Mysterious Hermit, or, Bowery Billy in Greenwich Village. By John R. Conway. Reprint of Bowery Boy #71.

Brave and Bold #413, The Stolen Portrait Mystery, or, Bowery Billy in Bohemia. By John R. Conway. Reprint of Bowery Boy #82.

Brave and Bold #416, The Panhandlers of Essex Street, or, Bowery Billy on the Warpath. By John R. Conway. Reprint of Bowery Boy #68.

Brave and Bold #419, The Trolley Transfer Grafters, or, Bowery Billy's Counterfeit Chase. By John R. Conway. Reprint of Bowery Boy #78.

Brave and Bold #422, The Mystery of the Haunted Ship, or, Bowery Billy in a Diving Suit. By John R. Conway. Reprint of Bowery Boy #93.

Brave and Bold #425, Foiling the Spanish Plotters, or, Bowery Billy in an International Broil. By John R. Conway. Reprint of Bowery Boy #94.

Brave and Bold #428, The Theatrical Mystery, or, Bowery Billy and the Matinee Idol. By John R. Conway. Reprint of Bowery Boy #95.

For my money, the last of the boy detective series was also the best—Bowery Boy Library. A Street & Smith publication, it began in 1905, folded in 1907, running only 100 issues. A cast of characters at the beginning of each number had this to say about the hero of these stories:

"Bowery Billy, an adventurous street Arab, whose career in the midst of the whirlpools and slums of a great city brought him in daily contact with such a variety of mysteries and puzzles waiting to be solved, that he just naturally fell into the way of acting the part of a young sleuth, and took the keenest delight in mixing up with trouble, such as can always be found in the neighbor-

hood of the once famous Bowery—a lad keen and shrewd as they make them, bold of heart, and ready at all times to take chances for a friend."

Bowery Billy Barlow was an interesting combination of youthful detective and street boy of the type made famous by Horatio Alger, Jr. "John R. Conway, Private Detective" was the name that appeared as author on all issues, a pseudonym covering several writers. It seems that J. C. Cowdrick may have started the series. Bowery Billy has some points of resemblance to Cowdrick's Broadway Billy—the former had a bootblack stand, but on the Bowery not Broadway, and he didn't go so far afield in his adventures as Billy Weston. Bowery Billy #1 is entitled, Bowery Billy, the Street Vagabond, or, A Boy Hero in Rags, and Broadway Billy #1 is Broadway Billy, the Bootblack Bravo, or, Brought to Bay by a Bold Boy, the first half of this title having its echo in Bowery Boy Library #32, Bowery Billy, the Bootblack Brave, or, The Nevada Sport in New York. Not that I think it's a reprint of Broadway Billy, tailored to fit the Bowery boy detective. I believe the Bowery Boy Library were all new stories.

Billy Barlow made a firm friend of Mr. Myrick, headquarters detective—probably first meeting him in #21, Bowery Billy's Dingy Dory, or, The Mystery of Mr. Myrick—and Billy assisted the older sleuth in solving many a case. As his services by the police grew in demand, Billy left his bootblack business mostly to assistants but didn't give it up altogether. He made money from the detective profession, and, although I can't recall that he ever appeared on the colored covers in any but his working clothes, we learn in the stories that he did own better garb for special occasions, such as dates with the young lady, Edith, who showed considerable interest in him.

Every Street & Smith artist contributed illustrations to this weekly except, I think, F. A. Carter. A good many were the work of Marmaduke



Russell, who was especially good at drawing attractive girls and women, and these were numerous in Billy's detective adventures. There are some good scenes of New York life, after the turn of the century, when hansom cabs, carriages and trolleys were beginning to get a little competition from automobiles.

Billy had many friends besides Mr. Myrick (as well as numerous enemies of criminal tendencies). One was the redhaired Thede Marston, a little older than Billy, who appeared frequently in the stories. Phil Erwin, a Westerner, was another. Boys of his own age, street gamins, were often Billy's assistants in tracking criminals:—Thistle Tom and Skilly and Sharpie and others. Billy didn't always stick to the Bowery, but went just about everywhere in New York and vicinity, including the water front. He got into some pretty tight places, but battered or wriggled his way out. A boy of the Bowery would learn early to be handy with his fists.

I think there is no doubt that J. C. Codrick wrote some of the stories, perhaps a lot of them. He was well experienced to do this type of yarn after his long Broadway Billy series. I have heard that #77, Bowery Billy for the Defense, or, The Firebug of Findley was one of his, and this might be used as a guide to others by studying the style of writing; the only trouble is that this number conflicts with a list once given me by Mrs. John H. Whitson, wife of the author, showing that her husband wrote the Bowery Billys from #76 to 83 inclusive. I know that W. Bert Foster wrote quite a few of them.

Here's a sample from the pages of #55, Bowery Billy's Bag of Gold, or, Helping the Man from Butte, the author, W. Bert Foster—one sure mark of identification is the expression used by a principal character on page 11: "You're looking as chipper as a Piegan squaw with a string of glass beads." Foster repeated this, with slight variation, in some of his tales for The Buffalo Bill Stories. Also, he used the exclamation point in punctu-



ation more frequently than some. Such, in part, are a writer's mannerisms, identifying his work. As the story opens, Bowery Billy is polishing the high-heeled boots of a man in a broad-brimmed black hat and frock coat, obviously a Westerner:

"I say, son, can you tell the difference between one of these city tin-horns and a man that's straight goods?"

"It ain't so hard ter do dat, mister."

"Perhaps not, for you. When I'm at home, I can pick out a fellow that's crooked as far off as I can see him. But it's different here. I'm far wide of my trail in a town the size of this. Now, there's a chap on the corner, over there, that I want you to size up on the quiet. Sabe? Just take his measure while you're at work; and when you're done with that brogan, tell me what you think of him."

"Green bananers!" exclaimed Billy of the Bowery, for his customer's odd request had aroused his surprise and curiosity.

"Over on the corner was a man in a suit of blue serge. He was 35 or 40 years old, and had every outward appearance of respectability and considerable means."



But Billy figures him to be on the crooked side and so expresses himself to the Westerner on the bootblack stand, who has been coming regularly to have his boots shined for a week. He displays a surprising knowledge of Billy's identity and Billy, in turn, surprises him.

"For instance," drawled the Westerner, "I know that you are Bowery Billy, the young bootblack detective; that you have done some clever work in the sleuth line, and that you are often called in by the police to help 'em unravel a particularly hard tangle."

"And you're Colonel James Mulvaney, of Butte, Montana," returned Billy, "and you're stayin', at de present time, at a boardin'-house on One Hundred and Fift- Street."

"Well, by glory!" muttered the Westerner, deeply surprised. "How'd you ever figure that out? I haven't told you a thing about myself."

"Billy grinned.

"Der information come my way," said he, "an' I grabbed it."

"How did my name come your way?"

"Second time you was on dat chair, went on Billy, 'you pulled a letter out o' yer pocket an' started to read it. Der empty envelope fell down an' laid in front o' me till yer got through. Dat was dead easy. Der envelope was addressed ter Colonel James Mulvaney, at dat uptown place I was tellin' yer of."

"But you might have been shy, even at that. The letter might not have been for me."

"Ever' time I brushed dat lid o' your'n dem nickel-plated letters 'J. M.', stared me in der face off'n der sweat-band. Yer might have been readin' a letter dat didn't belong ter you, but it wasn't reasonable ter think yer was wearin' another feller's hat."

"You said I was from Butte. How did that blow your way?"

"Der strap o' one o' yer boots is marked wid de maker's name, an' de place where he does business," answered Billy, with a sort of contempt for the ease with which his informa-

tion had been acquired."

The following is from #94, Bowery Billy's Spanish Case, or, Exposing the Carlist Plotters, also by W. Bert Foster:

"At night these Coney Island parks, with their countless colored lights, the gaily painted kiosks, the movement and coloring and life, all go to make up a picture easily imagined to be Oriental, or fairylike. No Eastern city—not even far-famed Benares—could be more brilliant than these scenes at the greatest amusement resort in the world.

"Billy and Thede (Marston) wandered on with the crowd, passed other crowds sitting down, within hearing of the tinkle of falling waters, and almost dazzled by all manner of tawdry display.

"... The 'big show' in the park was a Wild West entertainment, in which there were cowboys, cowgirls, an old-style stagecoach, and plenty of wiry-looking broncos."

One of the bronses goes hog-wild and Phil Erwin, Bowery Billy's friend from the West, gives a fine exhibition of cowboy horsemanship. Some of the riders in the Wild West show comment on it.

"I tell yuh what, fellers," drawled a young fellow who was rolling himself a cigarette and sitting sideways in his own saddle, "Yuh don't see such ridin' as that often."

"That's right, yuh don't, Monty."

"It would take Ted Strong or some of his rough riders ter beat that, heh?" declared he of the cigarette. "Hi, hi-yip! Hang ter him, pardner!"

Numerous titles in the Bowery Boy Library reflected the tangy street slang of that day—#11, Bowery Billy in Luck, or, Move-Along Mac, the Mercer Street Moke, #19, Bowery Billy's Blind, or, Thistle, the Tompkins Street Trimmer, #27, Bowery Billy's Bunco Block, or, Riddles, the Bank Runner, #31, Bowery Billy's Street Spy, or, Philip, the Pavement Pacer, #34, Bowery Billy on Broadway, or, Sandy, the Sidewalk Sifter, #62, Bowery Billy's Bravery, or, Chicot, the Chatham Square "Cherub",



#63, Bowery Billy's Auto, or, Artie, the Avenue Agent, #91, Bowery Billy's "Go" With the "Plute", or, The Fortunes of Folly Farleigh ("plute" being the Bowery boy's version of plutocracy or rule by the wealthy).

These titles also strike me as having particular drawing power, make you want to part with your nickel to see what it was all about—#24, Bowery Billy, the Subway Sleuth, or, The Boy Shadow Under the Streets, #30, Bowery Billy's Breakaway, or, The Crooks' Carnival, #68, Bowery Billy and the Panhandlers, or, Spotting the Fagin of Essex Street, #71, Bowery Billy's Crooked Trail, or, The Hermit of Old Greenwich Village, #80, Bowery Billy and the Missing May Queen, or, Bianca, the Belle of Little Italy, #87, Bowery Billy on the East-side Roofs, or, Trailing the Flying Man, #95, Bowery Billy on the Rialto, or, The "Rupert of Hentzau" Riddle, #99 Bowery Billy's Coney Island Jaunt, or, Trapping the Wizard of the Rollers.

Bootblack detective, boy beagle, street gamin detective, boy sleuth, street spy, boy ferret, "police special"—Bowery Billy, Broadway Billy and the rest of the youthful badgetoters are gone but not forgotten.

### NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Joseph J. Myler of Rochester, N. Y. has novels to trade for novels he wants.

Kenneth Daggett, Gardiner, Maine, lost his dear wife Aug. 6th. We all send you our deepest sympathy, Kenneth.

Just out! Billy the Kid. The Bibliography of a Legend, by J. C. Dykes, and published by The University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, N. Mexico. 1952. Price \$2.50, 177 pages. It is wonderfully gotten up, and bro. Dykes sure knew his history in the making.

Mrs. Barr Patten writes that there is a fine article on the Merriwell's in the August 1952 issue of Esquire Magazine.

Homer Croy has a very nice article

in the Pageant Magazine for June 1952 on "Let's Not Libel Jesse James" sent in by Frank Henry.

There's still another fine article that Frank also sent in on "Jesse James Died Here," with pictures by Harrison Hartley in the Ford Times Mag., March 1952.

Wm. Ganders Story Paper Collector is the cats meow. It's getting better all the time.

Sam Olnhausen is coming along slow, from the break in his ankle.

Michael Sadleir over in England sold his large collection of Penny Bloods and Dreadfuls to the San Francisco Museum for £500.

Howard J. Fahrer had a serious operation the first of this year, and is coming along pretty good now, although it was a long hard pull. Howard says he was reading an early copy of Happy Hours Mag, and he came across a small paragraph that would make excellent reading for the new members of the Roundup, he quotes:

"Novels make good friends: On hand when wanted! Quietly waiting when one is otherwise occupied! Never intruding but never remonstrating when intruded upon! Stored away for months alone awaiting the touch of the collector! Never get older, leave town, get sore, get sick, or die! Always the same as you left them last! What living friends like that!"

James W. Martin reports that Thor Mauritzen is very sick. Says he was up there on a visit and was surprised to find him not feeling so good. Jim also visited Paul Benton, Henry Stinemetts, and expected to visit Dave Adams and Mr. Bliss at the Huntington Museum—says he'd like to meet Ray Mengar, but his time was running short, and was afraid he couldn't make it.

Bro. G. D. Nichols of Nogales, Arizona, wants Vol. 2, No. 1 of Golden Days to complete his set.

Lou Kohrt and wife have been visiting America's most popular caverns, the Meramec Caverns of Stanton, Mo. It's the world's only 5 story cavern and a famous Jesse James hide-out.

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